

Present: Laila Barr; Dan Chavre; Ray Day, Jr.; Kathy Dunn; Dave Elliott; Kumiko Huff; Miranda Leidich; Joan Michaels; Ed Miller; Carla Saulter, chair; Bria Schlottman; Tina Shereen; Roger Thordarson, vice-chair

Excused: Jane Kuechle

Staff: Barbara de Michele, Community Relations liaison; Chris Arkills, legislative aide to Councilmember Dow Constantine; Sharron Shinbo, project manager for Metro's marketing section

Saulter opened the meeting at 6:05 p.m. and asked members to introduce themselves. She welcomed Arkills to the meeting.

Regional Transit Committee

Arkills opened by saying that Councilmember Constantine regretted that he could not attend this meeting. He said that Constantine's basic transportation philosophy is to offer travelers as many choices as possible. Not everyone will use a bus, a ferry or light rail, so King County needs to think strategically about offering people many ways to move throughout King County. That said, it is very clear that we will have to live with the road network we have, and figure out ways to reduce gridlock and move traffic smoothly. We can move 40 to 60 people with a single bus; we can move 800 people or more with a single train. We can mesh the two modes to create better north-south and east-west connections. We also have to think clearly about where we place transportation corridors to serve the greatest numbers of people, and encourage strong land-use planning.

Arkills addressed several questions submitted prior to the meeting by TAC members:

Ferry System: The county got into the ferry business for a number of reasons, triggered by the fact that the state was getting out of passenger-only ferries. King County had already invested ten years in the Elliott Bay water taxi "demonstration project." Other communities have been asking for ferry service for a long time. The new ferry district will run five lines on Puget Sound or Lake Washington. The legislature did reduce the ferry district taxing authority and allow for the transfer of some funds from the ferry district to the transit division. Day asked if the council would consider a transit district, and Arkills replied that it is possible in the future but probably not feasible this year, given the economic crisis.

Metro Funding: Metro has one of the best bus systems in the country and we need to keep it, said Arkills. Audit results will provide us with some strategic cost savings. Then we will have to think about how to fund the system we want. The 2009 Legislature did give the council the ability to raise property taxes and a small motor vehicle excise tax, but it is doubtful that the council will exercise either option.

Transportation Committee Abolished: The Transportation Committee was subsumed into the Physical Environment Committee to reduce the number of meetings required of each councilmember per week. When voters downsized the council from 13 members to nine members, they increased the constituent load for the remaining councilmembers. Arkills said that the new arrangement will be reviewed again next year, but one clear advantage of the new committee has been to link transportation planning to land-use planning.

Wrapped Buses: Arkills said that most of the TAC questions had to do with the loss of advertising revenues when wrapped buses were banned by the council. He said that Constantine supports wrapped buses with 15" window openings. He believes this compromise allows Metro to collect the same ad revenue while taking into account riders' concerns. Arkills and TAC members discussed this item in detail, with strong support for wrapped buses expressed by several TAC members. "Everything should be on the table," said Elliott.

Security: Arkills reviewed the steps that have been taken to increase the transit police force and increase safety on buses.

Website: Arkills said that "modest improvements" had been made to the Metro Web site and trip planner. He said that Constantine and King County Councilmember Kathy Lambert have been focused on Metro communications technology, and would like to see Metro broaden into such things as Twitter, Facebook, blogs, etc. In recent incidents, Metro's ability to let customers know which buses are running has improved. Constantine would like Metro to partner with a regional technology company, and perhaps get a "loaned executive" to assist us with long-term upgrades to the communications system. In addition, Constantine supports a Technology Advisory Committee.

At the end of his discussion, TAC members thanked Arkills for taking the time out of his busy schedule to meet with the group. Arkills remained to observe and participate in the rest of the meeting.

Advertising Update/Discussion

Shinbo provided the group with an overview of progress on several advertising fronts. The bus tunnel advertising has been very successful and well received by the public. She unveiled a Montana Tourism campaign that will be going up in May, June and July. Although Metro would like to start a bus shelter advertising demonstration project, efforts are stalled in several cities, including Seattle, Bellevue and Auburn. She said that the advertising RFP will go out for bid in either 2010 or 2011. It would be advantageous at that time to provide a wide range or package of viable revenue sources that companies could bid on, basically offering advertising throughout the entire system. Huff described the advertising she saw on Tokyo transit on her most recent visit to

Japan; Elliott also provided examples of heavily advertised transit systems. Shinbo said that Seattle residents have resisted advertising on public surfaces, but this might be a good time to raise the issue again.

During group discussion, the following points were raised:

- The TAC needs to address the public's aversion to advertising head on. Do we want to lose advertising or bus service? That's the tradeoff.
- Although Metro's long-term funding structure must be addressed, advertising revenue could provide relief to the system right now.
- We need to keep hammering on the big budget deficit. Any amount of advertising that Metro can bring in will reduce the number of routes that need to be cut.
- We need to talk about advertising more broadly than just wrapped buses.
- We should have a letter for the King County Council and other letters for jurisdictions. It's more powerful coming from citizens.
- If we let advertisers provide shelters and maintenance as part of the contract, we can require lighting. It's a safety issue.
- We should put shelter advertising into one letter; the whole issue of advertising into a second letter. We don't want to muddle our message.
- We have a better chance of effecting change because the system's broke and it's just getting worse.

By consensus, the group decided to write one letter to the council supporting bus wraps, and a second letter asking for broader cooperation with Metro advertising efforts that will be sent to all 39 local jurisdictions. Saulter volunteered to draft the first letter; Shereen will draft the second.

Thordarson said that TAC also needs a public relations campaign that doesn't stop at letters. He urged each member to talk with his or her councilmember and civic elected officials to "get the ball rolling." Arkills said he would be glad to arrange a meeting between TAC leaders and Transportation Choices Coalition to see if there is any interest in developing a campaign there. De Michele said she would follow up with Arkills on this proposed meeting.

Committee Business

- Day gave a brief report on his presentation to the Regional Transit Committee on the TAC 2009 work plan, and was commended by his fellow members for doing a great job as their representative.
- De Michele said that she has contacted all members whose terms are up this year and will be submitting the paperwork for those who have chosen to serve a second term. The TAC will have four openings starting in October 2009. One of those seats must go to a bus rider from the Fourth District; the rest may come from any district in King County.
- De Michele reported that "save the date" notices have been sent to 18 transit agencies for the statewide CAC Conference on September 25.

- Miller and Day gave brief overviews of the SW and SE Sounding Boards for LINK Light Rail Connections. Many issues were raised by the public and incorporated into Metro planning.
- Huff volunteered to attend the Regional Transit Committee meeting on May 20.

The meeting was adjourned by Chair Saulter at 8:15 p.m.